28: Spiro--10
116, 651, 631, [illegible]6, 793

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"This tribute [WPM: see pp. 9-10] is not entirely unreciprocal, however. Yap supplies Ifaluk with gifts, both of a material and a non-material nature. The material goods consist of turmeric, the native paint, which is highly valued on Ifaluk for both bodily decorations and for painting canoes. They also supply them with bamboo poles for construction purposes, for though bamboo grows on Ifaluk it is not too plentiful, nor is it as good in quality as the Yap bamboo. Finally flint stones are brought from Yap to be used to make fire.

Furthermore, Yap makes a non-material, or spiritual, contribution to Ifaluk. The Gagil priest accompanies his chief, and performs a religious ceremony, whose nature unfortunately, I did not manage to get any information on."

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958
OR21 Woleai OR21
Ifaluk



Katelu where Maur's spirit lingered; there was a tiny, thatched "god house" in the Valul household area on Falalap; and an immaculate, sanded circular altar as part of the Weluar household area. We called Arueligar the "high priest" because he had the highest ecclesiastical authority on the island, officiating at the few religious ceremonies we observed. Husky, handsome Truesai was his designated successor.

Ted, both in 1948 and in 1953, devoted much time to collecting notes on religious beliefs. He felt that these beliefs were steadily weakening, that he could notice a difference in this respect between his 1948 and 1953 visits. The gods, however, were still with us in 1953; alus, spirits, who haunted certain places, governed various natural events, and interfered for good or evil in the affairs of men. Ted collected a list of nine high gods, and of dozens of lesser spirits. He found, for instance, twenty-seven different alus concerned with different matters in connection with navigation and canoe building—though these, to be sure, are basic activities, much subject to divine guidance in any maritime culture.

My impression, however, based mostly on Ted's writings, notes and comments, is that the Ifalukians were far from having an organized theology. The accounts of divine affairs that Ted got from Arueligar and from the chiefs did not always agree; and most people apparently gave little thought to such matters, leaving them to the chiefs and the specialists. The alus were present, all right, but accepted as a part of the natural order of things: the spirits that every folk find in the world around them.

The vast majority of the alus were spirits of the dead. No one died while I was on Ifaluk, but Ted and Mel Spiro observed four deaths during their 1948 stay. They have described these in their book on Ifaluk: the intense preoccupation on the part of friends and relatives with trying to save a seriously ill person by every natural or supernatural means, the nightly wailing chants, the great seriousness surrounding possible death, and the abrupt relaxation of this seriousness once death has occurred, once the alus has left the body. They ascribe this attitude to the firm belief in the continuity of the soul.

The body of the dead, however, is given ceremonial treatment: the face is painted red, a new loin-cloth or skirt is put on, and then the